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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities Joins Broad Effort to Observe National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Nationwide campaign will take place in October

(Boise, Idaho) — September 23, 2013 — The Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities today announced its participation in National Disability Employment Awareness Month, an annual awareness campaign that takes place each October. The purpose of National Disability Employment Awareness Month is to educate about disability employment issues and celebrate the many and varied contributions of America's workers with disabilities.

The history of National Disability Employment Awareness Month traces back to 1945, when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October each year "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." In 1962, the word "physically" was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

"When I was growing up, many people doubted what I could do just because I was blind. But because I had people in my life who instilled in me an expectation of work and showed me opportunities to be successful, I completed college and became known for what I *can* do," said Kathy Martinez, assistant secretary of labor for disability employment policy when announcing this year's National Disability Employment Awareness Month theme, which is "Because We Are EQUAL to the Task."

Reflecting this year's theme, throughout the month, the Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities, working with the Idaho Employment First Consortium, and other partners will be engaging in a variety of activities to educate Idaho employers, educators, students and other citizens on disability employment issues and the role they play in fostering a disability-friendly work culture. These efforts include a proclamation by the Governor, Take Your Legislator to Work Day, and Disability Mentoring Day events in local communities.

"The Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities is proud to be a part of this year's National Disability Employment Awareness Month," said Tracy Warren, coordinator of the Council's Idaho Employment First Initiative "We want to spread the important message that a strong workforce is one inclusive of the skills and talents of all individuals, including individuals with disabilities."

People can visit the Council website at www.icdd.idaho.gov and Facebook page for information about employment for individuals with disabilities throughout the month of October and ongoing. Employers and employees in all industries can learn more about how to participate in National Disability Employment Awareness Month and ways they can promote its messages — during October and throughout the year — by visiting the ODEP website at www.dol.gov/odep/.